The Inquirer

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THE BLACK CAT

The world is learning a fair number of Russian proverbs from Mr. Khruschev. The latest is that a black cat crossing a road in front of someone is regarded as an affront. Mr. Khruschev for a short time was affronted by an officially supported American week of prayer for captive peoples. Nobody in this country has been affronted, although the judicial Devlin report has described Nyasaland, at present, as a "police state." Presumably the people of Nyasaland should have been included in the week of prayer. And the American churches should have prayed for the British as well, but it is doubtful if this was intended. God is considered to be more troubled about the implications of the cold war.

It is rather endearing for Mr. Khrushchev to be upset. His predecessor Stalin would have been much more of a communist. According to communist theory a week of prayer is just a piece of magical superstition, and so Stalin would have regarded it, and carried on with his next batch of judicial murders next morning. (Back in those days Mr. Khruschev would have helped him.)

The political climate has changed. The Russian leader can wrangle with the American Vice-Presidents in public, really in public, for all the world to see and hear. That would have been impossible—apart from technical difficulties—in Stalin's day. That the Russians, presumably, should be upset because of the week of prayer, seems to show that they are not so much cut off from ideas and emotions in the West as was generally supposed.

Being Selective

in fact, quite apart from all notions of superstition, they may have the same ideas about a week of prayer for other people that many people in the West have. It is always a dangerous spiritual practice to pray, even by implication, for the sins of others. It can suggest forgetting sins much nearer home. Churches have a right to go about their own business, and can stand or fall by it, but for a whole nation officially to sponsor prayers, seems to be getting near the bone of what may be called "Moral man in Immoral Society." What is the immoral society going to do with the moral man's prayers? Is God going to be an official representative of the West at Moscow or Geneva? God had better be kept out of the business, or if brought in, brought in for all suffering men everywhere. There are enough of them about on this globe without being intentionally selective about it.

The Kitchen Symbol

Which may serve to introduce the subject of kitchens. Apparently there has been some rivalry and conflict as between the Russian exhibit in America, and the American exhibition in Russia, as to which nation can produce the best kitchen. This room has been treated, if newspaper reports can be trusted, as a symbol of national rivalry. It is reported as Mr. Khrushchev's personal ambition to bring the Russian economy at least level with the American economy before he dies. And this is to be treated as a matter of pride.

It is wrong to simplify issues. It is pleasant after all if pride is to be satisfied in this modern world, here, there, and everywhere, by great nations competing with one another in turning out goods—instead of dominating one another. But that is not the end of the matter. If Russia within seven years can produce as many cars per head of the population as America, and discard them as rapidly (for upon this depends the production of cars), or produce other goods, such as radios, refrigerators and television sets, and discard them a short time after they are made, this is to be regarded as a mark of civilisation. It would be difficult for an observer anywhere to discover any other in general reports.

Nearer Home

Or if Britain, to bring the matter nearer home, could produce fuel from the sea, which shall be consumed in producing goods which also shall be swiftly consumed, this would be regarded as rather a high water mark in national prestige.

Why?

There is no answer in the mere production of goods, in keeping something ticking over, even in an exciting way, merely for the ticking and the excitement. That goods should be used for some purpose other than their mere production is every sane man's supposition. But what is this purpose? Mr. Khruschev will not tell the world, or for that matter few other national leaders. And to be just, there are few people who would listen if the national leaders got above the bread and butter, and the motor-car and refrigerator level. To feed the hungry and uplift the weary, yes. But to suppose that this is the prime motive of the modern scientific civilisation is to suppose that most men are thinking of this. They are not. When it is consciously felt it is dragged in often as a kind of conscience-saver.

To what purpose? To ignore this question is to see a "black cat crossing the road" in front of the spirit of man. It is an affront.

DIAGNOSIS OF OUR TIMES

I. RELIGION IN THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT

By A. Phillip Hewett

(In this and two following articles, Phillip Hewett will consider some of the religious difficulties of the day. Mr. Hewett is the Unitarian minister of the Vancouver church. He is at present visiting this country. The articles have been adapted by the Editor from sermons given by Mr. Hewett in his church. That they are addressed to the North American scene, makes them of particular interest, and of application, to this country.)

"The state of Christendom, as it faces the greatest crisis in its history, is terrifying. Only a miracle can save us." Those are the words of a leading minister in Toronto, speaking about the effectiveness of organized Christianity today as it confronts the challenge of Communism.

What does he mean? His words contract strangely with the reassuring words which come from other quarters, telling us that in Christianity we have the strongest bulwark against Communism in the Western world. The head of the Greek Orthodox Church on this continent, also speaking in Toronto, said: "Communism is a blessing in disguise, because it is making non-Communists more Christian."

But the verdict that the state of organized religion today is alarming is one which has been voiced again and again in recent years. And it seems to me that the voices which proclaim this are getting louder and louder all the time in opposition to the self-satisfied proclamations that are typical of so much of organized religion on this continent. Well, why should we not be satisfied? Churches seem to be flourishing, and isn't that an indication of the strength of religion? In the United States it is said that over 66% of the population is now attached to some form of organized religion. In this country the figures are not quite so high; those in a position to make an informed guess put it at around 50%. But this sounds good when you compare it with the figure for Britain, which is around 10%. Perhaps it does not sound quite so good when you try to work out what the figures might be if you were to exclude the Province of Quebec. But the official view is that the churches are flourishing, and that they are doing a good job in setting forth the spiritual foundations of our civilization which mark it off from godless Communism.

The Religious Revival

Everyone seems to be agreed that there has been a revival of religion in recent year, and religion, as is assumed, is a good thing. What then are we worried about?

Well, it's a long story. I have recently been examining some of the diagnoses of our condition that have been offered by writers of perception and ability. I have found the process a fascinating one. The illustrations I shall give will not be drawn from the life of Unitarian Churches. They are drawn, for the most part, from orthodox Christian churches in the United States. But I hope that the fact that we will be speaking of churches in another country and churches with another theology will not give us any false sense of superiority as we go along. For the prevailing patterns that determine church life in our culture take little account either of national boundaries or of theological distinctions, though certainly some of the manifestations will be different as we get nearer home.

I think, for example, we might exempt ourselves from the application of the following passage from Mr. Dennis Brogan's book *The American Character*. "Mr. Carlton Hayes," he says, "pointed out long ago that the ritual of flag-worship and oath-taking in an American school is a religious observance. Little boys and girls in a school from which religion in the old sense is barred, solemnly rise each morning and reciting together the 'American's Creed', are performing a religious exercise as truly as if they began the day with 'I believe in God, the Father Almighty' or asserted that 'There is no God but God'."

That is one form of institutional religion that we don't have here in quite the same form, but perhaps the differences are more superficial than real.

Organization Comes First

However, let's get back to one or two of the basic facts of the situation with which we have to reckon. One of these is the nature of Western man in general, as distinct from that of Eastern civilizations. The characteristic of the West is its organizing and technical skill. This has left its mark upon religion, even upon the same religion, for Christianity in its Eastern and its Western forms is quite different. In the Eastern churches there is a quiet, passive and more or less static attitude with a concentration upon ceremonials and liturgies, while the West has inherited the organizing genius of Rome and has constructed active, expansive institutions. Both these approaches have their virtues and then their drawbacks. But the peculiar danger of the Western activist approach is that means to an end may become ends in themselves, so that efficient organization becomes the goal rather than the high purposes of religion themselves.

This danger was pointed out by Dr. Jerald Brauer, Dean of the Federated Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago, in an address which was subsequently published in the *Unitarian Register*. He said: "What really holds the denominations together in America is not so much faith and order as life and work. All attention tends to be focussed on the denominational activities, and the interesting campaigns, drives and statistics tend to shoulder out the weightier matters of the Christian work . . . Religious belief, theology, the wrestle with the question of the relation of faith to culture are played down, while increasingly the emphasis is placed on techniques for bringing people into the churches. As more and more people are won into the churches the faith may actually have less and less influence on their total lives."

It is perhaps a more important lesson for us Unitarians than it is for people in the traditional churches. For whereas they have a comparatively straightforward definition of the faith they are required to accept, we have to forge ours in the crucible of living experience as we go along. We have therefore not only the task of relating our faith to our lives and to the life of the church and the world, but also that of clarifying through our own efforts just what our faith is, and then testing that faith by the highest standards we can find.

MANCHESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD

Annual Proceedings and Prospect

A mid-June Mecca for our Ministers and Laity is Manchester College, Oxford, and this year again, by the Monday evening, there were some sixty members of the College Council and Old Students, together with members of the Society of Worshippers, which forms the permanent worshipping congregation, gathered in the College Chapel for the Closing Service at which the Rev. A. W. Vallance, President of the General Assembly delivered the Address. The replacement of the boy choristers by four women's voices was a notable change, but the quality of the music is being most wonderfully maintained by Harold Spicer. The service in every aspect was greatly stimulating. The organ, one of the finest amongst many fine organs in Oxford, is now undergoing overhaul and cleaning. Donations received will mean that the College Funds will have to bear only a fraction of the considerable cost involved.

* * *

Certain paragraphs of the Principal's Report rebut the all too generally held impression in our movement that our College in Oxford is an ivory tower. "Those who study here are likely to find themselves in the midst of a ferment of thought which is liable to demand a re-examination of their whole outlook. This may be painful for the moment, but leads in the end to a faith built on firm foundations

If the policy adopted five years ago . . . has not captured the imagination of the churches from which young men and women come forward for the liberal ministry, as to lead to a substantial flow of students to this College, that is no reason for substituting a radically different type of training. . . . . Next to the training comes maintenance of a witness in Oxford to the great principles of Liberal Religion." Never has the witness been stronger than at present; a fact which should be acclaimed throughout the movement.

Sir Alister Hardy, F.R.S., now enters his second year as President of the College. There has been a marked increase in the number of members of the University attending lectures and classes given in the College by the Principal and the Rev. H. L. Short. One graduate and four undergraduates from our liberal churches, two of them sons of alumni, have been residents in the College Hostel, and have attended Chapel and Morning Prayers along with the theological students. Attendances at the Chapel have been well maintained. The Society of Worshippers has adopted an envelope offertory scheme, and the amount of collections has trebled in the last ten years. Although not registered as a congregation of the G.A. it supports the G.A. with an annual collection.

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Regular preaching is not, as a rule, considered desirable in the short Oxford term but the needs of our churches have been put first, and in addition to Cirencester, which has been served regularly, eleven other churches have been supplied by our students.

The Martineau Club, and especially the Schweitzer Society has had an increasing impact on the undergraduate world. The Women's League has played an important part in the social life which centres in the College.

The College Library has been increasingly used by undergraduates of the University both for books and as a quiet place of study.

During the vacations ten conferences were held at the College: five of them were outside bodies and five from our own Movement: the Old Students' Association, the Women's League Jubilee Conference, the Sunday School Association's Summer School, a Refresher Course for our Ministers, and the National Union of Lay Preachers' Easter School.

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The College is not only playing its part in the dissemination of Liberal Religion, and serving as a centre for denominational meetings, but is also a unique shrine where is commemorated the life and labours of the great souls of our movement, both lay and ministerial. Last June it was the memorial to Dr. Gilbert Murray which was unveiled in the College Chapel. This June it was a memorial to Dr. Alfred Hall which was unveiled by Dr. Mortimer Rowe and the Principal. Dr. Rowe's address was a most moving and just tribute to the memory of one of the greatest figures in our movement over the past half century.

Manchester College continues to be keenly aware of what has come to be known in the denomination as "the College Question". It is perhaps opportune to correct the implications of the misleading statement often heard, that "the Denomination cannot afford two (or more) Colleges". The denomination does not, and is not required to, support our College in Oxford financially either directly or indirectly. That there have been only two full-time theological students in residence during the past session should cause the question to be asked throughout the denomination, "Why are not the resources and facilities here available used far more fully than they are?" Surely the denomination must see that, in its own interests, some degree of direction of students is called for.

Six students, two of them from America, are expected to be in residence next session, and for the more distant future, very serious consideration is to be given to the possibility of raising the status of the College in Oxford and of extending its educational scope so that it may become again nearer to what it was originally, a Liberal Academy of the Arts and Sciences, while still maintaining, as its main purpose the training of candidates for the Ministry of Liberal Religion.

The whole of the Proceedings this June gave emphasis to the fact that though, like all our older congregations, it cannot find the word Unitarian in its foundation trust, it belongs inalienably in origin, character and present purpose to those of the free mind who now call themselves Unitarians.

EIGHT PAGE NEXT WEEK

We regret that it has not been possible to produce our usual eight page paper this week at the end of the printing dispute. We shall do so next week.

News Review

NEWS FROM THE NORTH

By A Northern Correspondent

New Minister's marriage

On Saturday, June 11th, at 11 a.m., Rev. Donald Dunkley, who has been a qualified minister now for only a month or so, was married to 20-years-old Miss Sigrid Swanstrom from California. The ceremony was conducted by Rev. John Gill in Platt Chapel, Rusholme, Manchester.

Rev. Dunkley, who is 24 years of age, is a life-long member of Platt Chapel, where his father frequently acts as organist. Before moving to their first congregation at Buxton, Derbyshire, the Rev. Dunkley and his wife ar spending a few days holiday in the Lake District.

The "revving" reverends . . .

Recently the Rector of Saint Ann's Church in Manchester, Canon Eric Saxon, stated in letters to the *Manchester Evening News* that all motor cycles should be banned from the road. Rightly enough, the Canon was stormed with letters from outraged enthusiasts who thought his statement unfair and ridiculous.

Would the Canon be shocked if he saw a clergyman riding a motor cycle? If he cared to take a census of how many parsons own motor-bikes in Manchester he would learn that at least three Unitarian minister, two students, and one lay-preacher travel by this economical form of transport to various parts of the city. The writer finds that his own minister is becoming quite an able pillion passenger on his 350 c.c. Norton.

The Great Hucklow venture

The new family conference which is to have its début at Great Hucklow during the first week in August has started well —70 people will be present (50 adults and 20 children). The homes' warden, jovial Mr. Henry Tittle, is certainly going to have his hands full during the latter part of July and for the week of the conference itself.

THEY DID IT THEMSELVES

WHEN members of Urmston Free Christian Church, Lancashire, heard that the hut at Cross Street, Manchester (which has been used since the chapel was bombed) was to be pulled down to make way for the foundations of the new building, they thought that the hut, rebuilt at Urmston, would make an excellent addition to the existing building as a Sunday School.

An estimated £92 was needed to dismantle and transport the hut which would take six men four days. Not having £92 for immediate use, eight Urmston men arrived at Cross Street one Sunday morning soon after seven o'clock and began work which finished by the light of a car's headlights, at eight in the evening. Two days later, with the aid of a furniture van, the sections were transported to Urmston.

There they waited several months while work parties, able to work only on Saturdays and Sundays, cleared and levelled the ground. As evenings became lighter work was started on three evenings a week as well. With great care joists were laid and floorboards levelled, and it is estimated that 3,000 man hours went into the new erection.

On February 14th this year the "new building" was opened by the Rev. T. Nuttall, president of the Manchester District Association. A cheque was presented and thanks were expressed

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of Cross Street Chapel, Mr. H. Howerdine, for a gift that has greatly enhanced the amenities at Urmston.

Considerable difficulties were raised by the local Council before permission (to reconsidered annually) was give for the building to be erected. Upon its completion the Council was the first to apply to use it for local elections. K. G. C.

World Refugee Year—Kendal's Effort

The town's fund-raising campaign for World Refugee Year was initiated by the Unitarian Chapel of Kendal, with a garden party in the Chapel grounds attended by the Mayor and Mayoress. A total of over £53 was handed over to the fund.

Devon Unitarian Congregations Association

The Devon Unitarian Congregations Association held its Summer meeting at Sidmouth on 15th July. After business matters were concluded, Rev. Dietmar Meyer-Klugel, B.A., B.D., minister of Ilminster and Yeovil, gave an address on "Advance—Where?" in which he stressed the need for Unitarians to have a distinctive approach of their own both, from the pulpit, as to all subjects remotely connected with religion, and as to a form of worship conducive to personal and collective meditation. Discussion ensued and questions were asked, after which over fifty representative of Devon congregations were entertained to tea by the ladies of Sidmouth Old Meeting.

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Change of Address

The Rev. E. Rosalind Lee is living at The Poplars Nursing Home, South Road, Smethwick, Staffs.

Miss H. E. Hargrove has now moved to 106 South Hill Park, London, N.W.3.

Holidays Abroad

THREE VACANCIES. Unitarian Party (September 20—October 3), Lugano, Italian Lakes. Ideal in early autumn. See Vintage carnival. Lone travellers welcome. Nothing strenuous. Write immediately: Rev. Parkinson, 10a Westbourne Grove, Scarborough.

Birth

WILLIAMS.—On July 19, to Mary and Tony, of 4, Pranimede Close, Wantage, Berks., a son (Matthew Vyvyan), first grandchild of Rev. and Mrs. H. L. Short, and first great-grandchild of Rev. and Mrs. Leonard Short.

Sir,

When we try to please all, we succeed—pleasing no-one—so does not an attempt to include all lead to a position where there is nobody who desires to be included?

I believe that in this present time we must assert our Unitarianism as distinct from Trinitarianism and all its concomitants. This assertion is what these people, and there are such, who have thought their way into our Churches so often find lacking.

We must have a distinctive position, otherwise what reason have we for our existence as a separate fellowship within the Christian Church.

This does not mean we need ask for any to subscribe to a profession of faith or exclude any who desire to worship with us.

Let us remember that our influence was greatest when we knew wherein we differed from the rest of the Christian Church, and it knew too, and, though it may not have loved us, it accorded us the respect which always comes to those who know what their position is and are prepared to stand by it.

Yours faithfully, M. M. Stych

Agreeing to Differ

Are we in favour of the title of Bernard Hamm's article "The Religion which agrees to differ"? The fact that fifteen thousand copies have been circulated among our community seems to imply that we are for the most part.

Should we not agree to differ even more unanimously therefore when religion tends to become merged with politics?

If so, then I suggest that it is in appropriate to use or display the word "Unitarian" except in direct support of the free religious faith of the Unitarian Church.

After all, nearly every shade of political opinion has its own appropriate society for promoting its particular aims, which we are all free to join if we wish.

Yours, A. L. Blake

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